



*“Representing the Agricultural Producers of Montgomery County”*

Mr. Evan Glass, Council President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

April 12, 2023

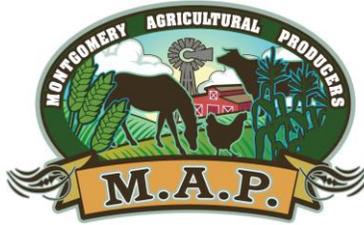
Re: Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan Update – Planning Board Draft

Council President Glass,

Please accept this written testimony from Montgomery Agricultural Producers (MAP) in reference to the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan Update – Planning Board Draft. The Agricultural Community has been struggling for years with the poor maintenance record and conditions of the designated roads in The Rustic Roads program in Montgomery County. The intent of this program made sense in preserving these scenic roads for future generations to enjoy. But somewhere along the way, there was a disconnect between the committee, the MCDOT, and the County Executive about how these roads should be maintained. The current Masterplan clearly states that these roads must be maintained for the safe movement of agricultural equipment from the field, farm, and market.

This means the trimming of vegetation from the shoulders and overhead trees should be done at a level that allows farm equipment to move safely. The culverts and drainage areas on the roads must be kept clear of weeds and debris so that during periods of wet and snowy weather it would allow the water to flow freely and not wash gravel and debris on the road. This can cause flooding in the summer and freezing ice on the roads in the winter. Of course, this type of maintenance was part of the executive regulations that were in the Master Plan back in 1995. We ask the Council to add language to this master plan review that ensures that this maintenance will be done properly in the future. We believe it is imperative that the Council work with the County Executive to have a plan in place to bring these roads up to their proper maintenance level as soon as possible.

We also feel it important to address the requests sent to the council from the Planning Board for changes to this Master Plan. We met with planning staff during their information-gathering sessions and found them to be open and understanding of our concerns about road maintenance. They traveled with us to see the conditions of some of these roads and we believe have a good understanding of our concerns. Although staff addressed these concerns to the Planning Board many were left out of the final draft submitted to the council.



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We’d also like to address the suggested changes to the staffing of the Rustic Roads Committee. Our comments below reflect these concerns to “Recommendations “heading number 28. in the draft:

- 1) We would ask that the 3 farm members’ income requirements be adhered to. It seems that this currently isn’t the case. We suggest that they operate commercial farms- and who own/lease one or more of the following large pieces of equipment; combine harvesters, planters, self-propelled sprayers/applicators, or sod harvesters. It’s imperative that these requirements be met.

We would request that at least two of these farm members be grain farmers. This type of farming uses the largest equipment and uses these roads daily. They would bring invaluable input to the committee.

- 2) We would request that the AAC Member of the RRC committee be picked by the AAC and be connected to farming.
- 5) We understand the request to increase the total committee membership from seven to nine members. We would request that these two new members be from the ag community. Possible Fruit or Vegetable growers. But at minimum be agricultural producers.

We agree with the suggestion that the Ag Community-RRC-MCDOT should work together in making sure these safety and maintenance goals are met with the lowest possible impact on preserving these roads for future generations to enjoy. But we must first and foremost make sure they are safe for all citizens that travel on these roads daily. Since the closing of Whites Ferry, many of these roads are now being used as commuter routes.

We thank the Council for your consideration in addressing these concerns. We would like to offer our assistance during the committee and council work sessions if needed. We stand ready to assist in this review process in any way the council sees fit.

Sincerely,

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